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SUBJECT: TURKEY: FS MILIBAND ADVOCATES BOLD EU STEPS

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Classified By: Political Counselor Janice Weiner for Reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

¶1. (C) Summary and Comment: UK Foreign Secretary David Miliband utilized his first visit to Turkey to urge the GOT to take bold moves on EU accession. Regarding Cyprus, Miliband pressed for responsible Turkish engagement. FM Babacan's pitch for increased UK engagement with Syria fell flat. Miliband's EU-centric approach appears in synch with PM Erdogan and President Gul's renewed focus on EU-related reforms, which has been on the back burner for the past year.
End Summary and Comment.

¶2. (C) In the first high-level visit to Turkey since formation of the new government, UK Foreign Secretary David Miliband used his meetings with PM Tayyip Erdogan, President Abdullah Gul, and Foreign Minister Ali Babacan to press for continued EU-related domestic reforms. UK Embassy officials report that Miliband encouraged Turkey to engage the EU and advocate for its candidacy. As a starting point, Miliband suggested that amending Article 301 and resolving the Greek Orthodox patriarch issues would go far in countering the EU member states' negative views of Turkey. Domestically, Miliband also proposed that the GOT make a concerted effort to change increasingly negative Turkish public opinion toward Turkey's EU bid.

¶3. (C) Miliband told FM and lead-EU negotiator Babacan that "now is the time for bold moves," urging renewed momentum in Turkey's EU accession process. He focused specifically on political reforms and Cyprus as areas for improvement. Miliband warned that Turkey's disruptive behavior in international organizations, such as in NATO regarding ESDP and in OSCE regarding Cyprus, has begun to garner "ill will from good friends." Regarding Cyprus, Miliband urged the GOT to take bold unilateral steps to avoid being placed on the defensive by the Greek Cypriots. GOT officials indicated that starting any major initiative would have to wait until after Cyprus' presidential election early next year. Babacan expressed frustration at Cyprus' apparent lack of interest in negotiating. Encouraging Babacan to keep up the pressure, Miliband reiterated that Turkey "has a friend" in the UK.

¶4. (C) Erdogan, Gul, and Babacan all commented on the perceived lack of U.S. action against the terrorist PKK, with Erdogan stating that Turkish patience was running out. Miliband and Babacan discussed growing reports of PKK extortion attempts on Turkish businessmen in London. Miliband repeatedly emphasized that the PKK is not receiving support from the USG.

¶5. (C) The Iraq discussions focused primarily on economic development. Calling for increased participation from Turkish companies, Miliband underscored the dire need for investment in Basra and Southern Iraq. GOT officials spoke

about developing a Basra industrial zone similar to the project that the Union of Chambers and Commodity Exchanges of Turkey (TOBB) is working on in Erez, Gaza (REFTEL). Miliband confirmed that he would attend the Iraq Neighbors Conference ministerial to be held in Istanbul October 31-November 1. President Gul noted that Iraqi President Talabani could be visiting Turkey in the near future.

¶6. (C) Regarding other regional issues, Turkish officials reported having conveyed "tough messages" to Iran on the need to cooperate with the international community on the nuclear issue. Babacan urged greater UK engagement with Syria. Miliband responded that the UK's previous attempts had not reaped sufficient results. Syria would need to exert more effort if the UK was to initiate any further engagement. Turkish officials also expressed interest in the U.S.-proposed Middle East peace process conference, but were uncertain of its prospects and planning.

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